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Immigrants, supporters say: End ICE raids!

By Bob McCubbin
San Diego

A terror raid against immigrant workers at a meatpacking plant in Postville, Iowa, by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents on May 12 devastated a whole town. (See WW, May 29.) Residents and local officials have expressed their shock and anger in the national media.

A group of Guatemalans living in the United States has launched an online protest petition focusing on those at the plant who came from Guatemala and make up approximately 300 of the 390 workers detained in this town of only 3,000 people. To add your name to the petition, contact regimarroquin at hotmail.com. To provide material assistance to the support effort that has been set up for the detained workers, visit mainstreetproject.org.

In Northern California the Alianza Latinoamericana por los Derechos de los Inmigrantes (ALDI—Latin American Alliance for Immigrant Rights) is providing frequent e-mail reports on ICE activities. Their May 23 news release says that in the preceding three weeks, ICE had arrested 905 individuals in California. Among these victims of ICE terrorism are 63 people who worked at El Balazo restaurants in the San Francisco Bay Area. ALDI has called for support demonstrations for these workers at their hearings. ALDI may be reached at alianzalatioamericana at gmail.com.

Students at the University of California-San Diego organized a rally on May 22 to protest an ICE raid at an area bakery in which 18 workers were detained. Two human rights observers present

at the raid were questioned, threatened with arrest, their video camera seized and the images on it erased. Following the raid another worker at the bakery, who is also a student at UCSD and a permanent resident of the U.S., was harassed by ICE agents at the campus housing where he lives with his family.

The harassed student, Jorge Narvaez, opened the rally by condemning “the inhumane process of extrac-tion” practiced by ICE.

Pedro Rios spoke representing the American Friends Service Committee. He was present at the raid and was threatened by ICE agents. “We must be allowed to document these raids,” he told the assembled crowd.

Olga Torres, a leader of VAPPOR-Oaxaca, condemned the “free trade” agreements that have made life in their home coun-tries impossible for millions of workers.

Jorge Mariscal, a professor at UCSD and longtime activist, condemned the U.S. government for breaking down doors in Iraq and here. “Starving people will keep coming here, so the problem isn’t going away,” he pointed out.

Cecilia Ubilla, also a UCSD professor and one of many Chileans forced to flee their native country following the U.S.-sponsored fascist coup against the Allende government in 1973, expressed her solidarity with Narvaez and drew a parallel to Chilean fas-cism where, she emphasized, students were declared enemies of the state.

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BOSTON STUDENTS TO ICE:

‘We want our teacher back!’



Students, teachers and their allies gathered in Boston May 24 to speak out against the unjust deportation of their beloved teacher, Obain Attouoman, an Ivory Coast citizen. According to openmediaboston.org, Attouoman was attending a meeting with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials at the agency’s office in Burlington, Mass., when he was arrested and deported. The exact reason for his deportation at this time is unknown.

Attouoman had been granted a stay of deportation from March 2005 to March 2007, after the highly publicized and well-organized resistance of his students and fellow teachers to an earlier order. Sens. Ted Kennedy and John Kerry along with Rep. Ed Markey had filed legislation that would have granted him permanent residency. The status of this legislation remains unclear.

Mr. Obain, as he is known by his students, was released in March 2005 from a Suffolk County Jail after being jailed for three months on a warrant for deportation. He said that, “The agency (ICE) does not look at me as a human being, with a life and feelings and history.” What happened to Mr. Obain

was just “business as usual” for Homeland Security and ICE.

From New Bedford to the Bay Area to New Orleans, all across the U.S., Homeland Security and ICE are terrorizing and breaking apart the lives of individuals and families. Last March, ICE arrested 361 people, mostly immigrant women who were employed at a factory in New Bedford, Mass. In August, Elvira Arellano was arrested in Los Angeles and deported back to Mexico. While speaking at a rally her young son, Saul “Saulito” Arellano said, “I want to tell all of you to tell President Bush: Stop the raids! Stop the deportations! Stop the separation of families!”

These acts of terrorism are happening every single day across this country. Whether we are talking about the unjust denial of a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal or the acquittal of the New York Police Department for the brutal killing of Sean Bell or the racist targeting of immigrants and forced displacement of the survivors of Hurricane Katrina, we need to understand that solidarity is our most potent weapon.

Let us remember the words of the women of the South African National Congress, “You have struck a rock. You have dislodged a boulder. You will be crushed!” A unified movement will be the boulder that crushes this racist, imperialist system.

—Report and photo by Miya

The writer is an organizer for Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) and the Women’s Fightback Network (WFN) in Boston.

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Struggle not over as California ban on same-sex marriage overturned

By Bob McCubbin
San Diego

The recent California Supreme Court ruling in favor of same-sex marriage represents a serious setback for the forces of bigotry and division. Following the announcement, photos, video clips and the joyous statements of lesbians and gay men celebrating the decision filled the media here in California.

In its 4-3 ruling, the state's highest court said that two state laws prohibiting same-sex marriage are discriminatory and thus unconstitutional. California joins Massachusetts as a state where same-sex marriage is now legal. Same-sex couples so inclined can begin marrying about mid-June.

Finally, same-sex couples in California will enjoy all the same marital rights and benefits as opposite-sex couples.

But the very powerful forces of reaction are not accepting their defeat quietly. Backed by big bucks and using deceptive pitches, their petitioners have collected approximately 1.1 million signatures among the voters in this populous state for a November ballot proposition that would amend the state constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage. And these big money, bigoted forces are also seeking a court injunction that would bar any same-sex marriages in the state until the November vote on that amendment, which they hope will halt any further efforts for equal access to marriage.

One of the two laws overturned by the court had passed, in the form of Proposition 22, with 61 percent of the vote in 2000. While there is every reason to believe that the intervening years of continuing struggle against homophobia and homohatred have educated the state's voters about the need to stand up for equality, political activists are not taking anything for granted. The necessity for continuing struggle and educational work is made clear by the still prevalent level of bigotry in many communities, the media, the educational system and elsewhere. A most dramatic and tragic manifestation this past February was the Oxnard, Calif., homophobic murder of openly gay 15-year-old Lawrence King. Murderous violence against lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people has a horribly persistent history in the U.S.

While any decent person would condemn acts of violence based on a person's sexuality or gender identity, the people who oppose same-sex marriage have what they consider a rational argument.

Judge Marvin Baxter, one of the three dissenting justices in the California Supreme Court case, argued, "Nothing in our Constitution, express or implicit, compels the majority's startling conclusion that the age-old understanding of marriage—an understanding recently confirmed by an initiative law—is no longer valid."

In a less abstruse way of putting it, the state attorney general's office, which appeared in court to defend the ban, said that the judges should abide by the historic understanding of marriage as being between a man and a woman.

First let's focus on their use of the words "age-old" and "historic." In her book "Marriage, a History," Stephanie Coontz traces the origin of the now-prevalent idea of love-based heterosexual marriage as a development mainly

of some Western cultures in the late eighteenth century. Her cross-cultural and historical research uncovered a dazzling variety of earlier marriage arrangements, most based on economic and political considerations rather than romantic love.

Although Coontz's exposition exhibits little understanding of, or interest in, class differences, her findings on the determinants of marriage historically square with Dorothy Ballan's characterization of the family in her insightful work "Feminism and Marxism" as, in its essence, the basic economic unit of class society. Drawing on Frederick Engels' work, "Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," Ballan explained how human families have changed as the economic organization of society has changed.

So when the opponents of same-sex marriage appeal to the sanctity of "traditional marriage," they should be questioned about which tradition and what stage of human social development they're appealing to. And why!

But as equally important to the defense of same-sex marriage as the lack of a single historical form for marriage is the issue of whether human pair bonding, whether described as marriage or otherwise, has historically been restricted to heterosexuals. Homosexually oriented people have existed in every human society and their pairings have been secret or open or even officially sanctioned based mainly on prevailing social attitudes, attitudes which have reflected more and more hostility toward the rights of women and of homosexuals as class society has evolved.

One recent print attack on same-sex marriage heralded "the 5,000-year tradition" of heterosexual marriage. Interestingly, five millennia ago was about when the first class-based, slave-based human societies began to consolidate. It's also when the historic oppression of women materialized and when sexual and gender variation began to be proscribed. Engels pointed out that these developments coincided with the introduction of private property, a concept totally foreign to the earlier, communal societies. The preceding, communal form of human social life had no use for methods of inducing social inequality and intra-class divisions. These societies were characterized by sharing and valued all members of the group for their contributions to the survival and well-being of the group.

Today we continue to live in societies divided by class and riddled by race, sex, gender and other prejudices. The present day capitalist rulers constitute a smaller and smaller numerical proportion of society while the number of working and oppressed people grows and grows. The rich continue to rule only by sowing divisions among the rest of us. The absurd controversy over the right to same-sex marriage is just one example.

We need to deprive them of the weapons they use to divide us. We need to continue and deepen the fight for equal rights for all. Defending our diversity will bring our class the unity we need for victory in the struggle for global justice and peace. For socialism!

The writer is the author of the groundbreaking book, "The Roots of Lesbian and Gay Oppression," originally entitled "The Gay Question: A Marxist Appraisal," released in 1976.



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Vol. 50, No. 22 • June 5, 2008
Closing date: May 28, 2008

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; foreign and institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at www.workers.org/email.php.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

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OBAMA AN ANALYSIS

BY LARRY HOLMES



May 27—Though still not a certainty at this date, it now appears likely that Barack Obama will be the Democratic Party's presidential candidate and, even less certain but a possibility, the first Black president of the U.S.

Even for those of us in the U.S. and around the world who correctly view the crisis-ridden capitalist system, its political parties and its sham elections as the negation of democracy so far as the workers and the oppressed of the world are concerned, it is impossible not to acknowledge that the prospect of the election of a Black president in the U.S.—the center of world imperialism and racism—is an historic event.

Only six months ago, most thought they'd never see a Black politician get this close to the U.S. presidency in their lifetime. It's not surprising that the overwhelming majority of Black people in the U.S. support Obama's campaign.

It is surprising and revealing that so many white people also support Obama. Whether Obama's white support will remain strong is a big question. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton is still trying to bust it up, and if Obama is the Democratic Party candidate, Sen. John McCain and others will try to destroy it with a no-holds-barred racist campaign.

Still, however untested, fragile and contradictory, it is most welcoming and encouraging for anyone who is progressive and familiar with the depth and prevalence of racism in the U.S. that tens of millions of white people have voted for a Black person named Barack Hussein Obama in the Democratic party primaries and caucuses.

Obama is not a revolutionary and he poses no threat to the capitalist system. Still, in a relative sense, it is hard to imagine a more dramatic sign than Obama's electoral success that the people of the U.S. want to break with the reactionary, warmongering, racist and xenophobic political climate that has endured seemingly forever and certainly since 9/11.

Obama is popular because the people want to end the war in Iraq and there is a belief that Obama is more likely to do that than Rodham Clinton, who only a few weeks ago vowed to "obliterate Iran" and is widely viewed as being tied to Bush's endless war policy. As far as advancing the interests of U.S. imperialism goes, there is no fundamental difference between Rodham Clinton and Obama—or McCain, for that matter.

Many if not most of Obama's foreign policy advisors are veterans of Bill Clinton's presidency but, despite that fact, so far as the masses see the war, while Rodham Clinton seems to be for some change, Obama seems to represent more change.

The catchword here is "seems." In fact, Rodham Clinton, McCain and Obama have all pledged to continue the occupation of Iraq after the elections. They have all also vowed to intensify the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan, attack Iran "if necessary," support Israel to the hilt and continue the blockade against Cuba.

Class character of Obama's campaign

The masses did not launch Obama's presidential campaign—a section of the U.S. ruling class and its political operatives did. Some in the ruling class got behind Obama merely to advance their faction fight against the Clintons inside

the Democratic Party. And yes, some of those opposed to Clinton are misogynist, plain and simple.

But other forces in the U.S. ruling class have rallied behind Obama because they view him as better suited than Clinton or McCain to deal with a central crisis of U.S. imperialism. They need to find a way to halt the rapid deterioration of its position as the world's dominant economic and military power.

The foreign policy debate among the candidates seems to have been reduced to whether or not U.S. imperialism should talk to its enemies, with Obama advocating the talk instead of—or in addition to—a war policy.

Fundamentally, this is a phony debate. Diplomacy or talking is just another weapon that every imperialist government uses to further its interests. Imperialists talk one day and bomb the next. From the perspective of broad strategy, however, there is something to the debate.

To Obama and his ruling class backers, the so-called neo-conservative policy of relying on U.S. imperialism's military might to re-colonize the Middle East and dominate the world has been a complete catastrophe, leaving U.S. imperialism's power and standing in shambles.

Obama and his backers want to try a different approach. Obama is more attuned and reflective of the emerging new transnational capitalist order created by imperialist globalization.

To reverse the erosion of U.S. imperialism's world position, Obama wants to pivot away from relying exclusively on military might, put a friendlier face on U.S. imperialism and strengthen its ability to compete economically with China, India, Europe, Latin America, etc.

The contradiction is that the problems of the capitalist system are so many and so grave that Obama, new ideas and all, can't fix them.

The near collapse of the world banking system this past March, saved only by the massive intervention of the U.S. Federal Reserve, was not the end of the capitalist credit crisis. It's the beginning of a new systemic crisis of world capitalism that's likely to be bigger and more violent than the Great Depression of the 1930s. The only question is the speed with which the crisis will unfold and the events that will affect its course.

U.S. imperialism is bogged down in at least two wars that it can neither win nor abandon, with a possibility of war against Iran before the fall elections.

For the workers, things are only getting worse. The rate of home foreclosures and job layoffs is rising every month, only outpaced by rising gas and food prices.

Many are worried that racism will take down Obama's candidacy. Others are worried that racist bullets could take Obama's life. These are both serious things to worry about.

The most frustrating problem may be that because Obama is a captive of the awful system he seeks to serve as president, he can't defend himself. The attacks have already been terrible and if Obama gets the Democratic Party nomination, from now until November he's going to be called a traitor, a terrorist and a threat to Western culture, civilization, Christianity, "American" values and worse.

And if Obama wants to win the election, he's going to have to take it and smile because it's not really the approval of the masses that he needs to get to the White

House; it's the approval of the capitalist ruling class and the election campaign is his audition before them.

One of the reasons that Clinton—once the status quo candidate of the Democratic Party hierarchy—was able to pose as the populist champion of workers (not Black workers and immigrant workers, but U.S.-born white workers) is because Obama was forewarned that if he wanted to be the first Black president, he'd better not sound like a civil rights leader or a fighter for the working class.

It's a widespread misconception that Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Obama's former pastor, almost torpedoed his presidential campaign. This is not true. Rev. Wright didn't play those sound bites from several of his sermons over the airwaves non-stop. All of this was deliberately and carefully orchestrated by the ruling class media as a kind of loyalty test for Obama.

There is no logical reason why the U.S. ruling class need question the loyalty of Obama. However, the U.S. ruling class is not logical; it is deeply suspicious and paranoid, as one might expect from a deeply racist and reactionary class of exploiters and oppressors who have built an empire through slavery, colonialism, war, robbery and repression. The U.S. ruling class is acutely conscious of what it has done and continues to do to Black people.

The U.S. ruling class knows and fears the deep anger that Black people have for them. The purpose of the Rev. Wright affair was to force Obama not only to repudiate and break with Rev. Wright, but more importantly to promise that he would never give voice to or even acknowledge the existence of racism and the anger against it if he's elected president. Racism is all too alive, but Obama must pretend as though it's a thing of the past.

Relationship of working-class, anti-imperialist & Black liberation movements to Obama

Suppose Obama is elected president. One of the first orders of business for the next U.S. president will be presiding over massive cuts in social programs including Medicare, Medicaid, education and Social Security.

Moreover, these cuts will be taking place at the same time that workers are being pummeled and bloodied by a deepening economic crisis.

It isn't hard to imagine the ruling class setting up the first Black president to take the blame for all the pain, suffering and crisis that is sure to come.

This brings us to the question of the relationship between the working-class movement, the anti-imperialist forces, all progressive forces, and especially those who are working to reconstitute a working-class-centered, anti-imperialist Black liberation movement in the U.S., and the Obama phenomenon.

For the broader movement, clearly we cannot get carried away with our criticism and exposure of Obama when mass support for him is essentially progressive

and opposition to him is largely of a racist and reactionary character. Neither can we afford to be deluded by the class nature of Obama, and all the other contradictions.

The contradictions also make it difficult if not futile for revolutionaries to work inside his campaign as a vehicle for advancing progressive demands. Obama does not yet feel pressure from the mass movement. The pressure he is sensitive to is coming from the ruling class.

By way of historical comparison, Jesse Jackson's two campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination in the 1980s were full of contradictions as well. The difference, however, is that Jackson's campaigns came from below and as such were subject to the pressure of the masses. That is not the case with Obama's campaign, at least for now.

Actually, the only way that progressives can defend Obama against racism and reaction, if and when that's necessary, is to be positioned outside of and independent of his campaign and the Democratic Party.

It will be up to Black activists to take the lead in explaining Obama's contradictions and challenging them. If there was ever a time for progressive and revolutionary Black forces to forge some strategic unity, now is such a time.

It is possible that the independent presidential candidacy of former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney could serve as one of the poles to unite around. McKinney was until recently the most progressive and militant Black person in Congress. Indeed, she lost her congressional seat twice as a direct result of her militant antiwar and anti-racist work.

Clearly, for all those on the left who realize that the deepening crisis of imperialism is bound to produce a resurgence of the working-class struggle sooner than many think and radicalize more and more workers, swelling our ranks, the need to foster working-class-centered and anti-imperialist organizations independent of the ruling class's political parties and rooted in the struggle is beyond essential. It's urgent.

More than ever, workers are starting to view imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as major aggravating factors deepening the economic crisis, and rightly so. The reality is not lost on workers who know that, to pay for imperialist wars, they are forfeiting not only social programs but the gas they need to drive to work.

The war crisis and the economic crisis together are laying the basis for the next phase of the anti-war struggle. It will be more than a marginal protest movement that can be absorbed and derailed by the capitalist elections. The next phase of the anti-war movement, if working-class militants prevail, will be centered in a working-class upsurge.

The sisters and brothers of the International Longshore Workers Union gave us all a glimpse of the potential of this next phase when thousands of them shut the docks down all along the West Coast of the U.S. this past May Day to protest the war. Of no small significance, particularly in light of the contradictions of the 2008 presidential campaign, this walkout was led by Black longshore workers who, along with immigrant rights workers, invited Cynthia McKinney to be the guest speaker at the main May Day rally in San Francisco.

The writer is a leader of Workers World Party and a member of its national Secretariat.

Another important battle

American Axle strike

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Detroit

During the week of May 18 under massive pressure from the UAW International and the American Axle Manufacturing bosses, workers at American Axle plants in Michigan and New York ended their courageous three-month strike, voting to accept a concessionary contract. Five days later, UAW President Gettelfinger and AAM signed the contract. Plants are now in the process of resuming production.

The contract is rife with concessions and givebacks, many of which the rank and file members are only now learning about. As more onerous details emerge, they hold the potential to spark many battles within the plants and beyond.

Despite all odds, the workers at American Axle led the way by fighting back against a profitable company, which had the full backing of GM and other Wall Street vultures, and a media blitz that hammered constantly with the lie that concessions were necessary to save the company. Many workers rejected the pressure and fought to the end for a decent contract. The vote totals showed almost 25 percent of workers at UAW Local 235 rejected the contract, as did about 10-20 percent of workers at the other locals.

The workers of AAM and allies with their fighting spirit will apply the numerous critical lessons of the strike to regroup for inevitable class battles every day on the shop floor.

A most critical lesson of the strike was the leadership displayed by the Black workers, women and men. The picket lines were strong during the winter-long, three-month strike. Unity with white workers and members from other locals and communities and progressive organizations was solid. Food and money poured in to aid the workers and their families who were trying to make it on a

paltry \$200 a week strike pay. Meanwhile the Gettelfinger leadership was sitting on hundreds of millions of dollars in the strike fund.

Strike weapon needs sharpening

The workers' action at AAM showed the power of the strike weapon. Over the duration of the strike, 30 GM plants were idled and the corporation lost at least \$2 billion in idled plant production and lost sales. AAM lost millions and both companies suffered big-time stock market losses.

To be effective, the strike weapon today needs to incorporate and broaden a political strategy that raises class consciousness and the understanding that conditions under capitalism are the result not only of downsizing, restructuring and offshoring. They are also being driven relentlessly by competition. There is no economic struggle that doesn't become political. Competition is global, based on the scientific technological revolution, which has revolutionized the means of production.

Under present-day capitalism/imperialism, competition is deeply embedded in the drive for profits and investment to increase production and lower labor costs. Expand or die is their motto. This is the very nature of capitalist competition. And increasingly workers in capitalist countries are being pitted globally against workers in the developing countries in a race to the bottom.

The courageous workers at AAM were led to a concessionary contract by a UAW International leadership that sees only one way to respond: adjusting and conciliating, instead of fighting back on an internationalist basis together with unions and their allies worldwide.

Within the AAM strike the auto barons whipsawed the workers both in the U.S. and elsewhere where the company has operations, which led to the concessionary contract. Without the knowledge of how



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Many workers came out to support the UAW strikers, left, WW reporter Bryan G. Pfeifer, center above is Abayomi Azikiwe, Editor, Pan-African News Wire.

More than at any time in history this is a life and death question. To be victorious, the change has to come from below, from the multinational workers, organized and unorganized. True leadership must be thoroughly independent, politically anti-capitalist, militant, internationalist and ready to struggle. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

Immigrant workers stage hunger strike

Remember after the government-made disaster following the disastrous hurricanes in 2005 that workers were needed in New Orleans to help rebuild the region? Well, some profit-hungry firms like Signal International decided to hire welders and pipe fitters from India to rebuild the shipping industry in the Gulf and not train the local population who desperately needed jobs to replace ones that were lost. So Signal lured more than 550 Indian workers with promises of permanent visas for themselves and their families, and the workers paid recruiters up to \$20,000 for the privilege. However, when they arrived in New Orleans, the workers were forced to work for low wages, live in cramped, unsanitary housing, and pay exorbitant rent. They also discovered they only had "guest worker" visas.

To protest this modern-day slavery and expose this human trafficking chain, more than 100 of the workers quit their jobs at Signal on March 6. With the help of the Indian Workers Congress and the Alliance of Guest Workers for Dignity, affiliates of the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, they are struggling not just for themselves but for all immigrant workers in the U.S. To call attention to that struggle, five brave workers started a hunger strike on May 14 in front of the White House. On May 21, joined by six more, the hunger strikers moved to the U.S. Capitol Building to shame Congress into calling hearings about Signal's lies and crimes. (NOWRJ press release, May 21) To find out more about this struggle and to find ways to support these courageous workers, go to www.unionjustice.org.

Calif. Letter Carriers support Gulf Coast Reconstruction

On April 12, the California State Association of Letter Carriers, which represents more than 43,000 workers, adopted a strongly worded resolution supporting the implementation of a federally funded Gulf Coast Reconstruction Program. The resolution stipulated that such a program would include prevailing wages for workers, the right to organize, the right to return to the Gulf for all those who were displaced, a Gulf Coast Public Works Program similar to the Works Progress Administration of the 1930s, and national solidarity committees that would continue to struggle for a just reconstruction.

Enough is never enough

Big three bosses plan more auto layoffs

By Martha Grevatt

"One team. One plan. One goal. One Ford."

This slogan is one big load of horse manure from the pen of Ford CEO Alan Mulally. In a published letter to all Ford employees, Mulally—who was paid \$22 million last year while UAW members swallowed enormous contract concessions—informed "the team" that more job cuts are coming. Since early 2006, Ford's "Way Forward" has eliminated 47,000 positions.

The cuts, carried out with additional buyouts and possibly involuntary layoffs, are expected to be finalized by Aug. 1. Without giving specific numbers, the May 22 memo states that "We will need to make additional reductions in U.S. automotive personnel and other salaried-related costs."

What might Mulally be referring to by "other salaried-related costs?" Workers need to read between the lines and be ready to fight any attempt by Ford to extract pay and benefit cuts along the lines of the drastic concessions in the American Axle contract.

UAW members should not be taken by surprise if Mulally—or for that matter other CEOs, Chrysler's Bob Nardelli or General Motors' Richard Wagoner—picks up where AAM's Richard Dauch left off

and demands "a competitive wage."

Chrysler has already announced it may cease production of some large vehicles ahead of schedule, citing the price of gas and the unwillingness of consumers to purchase these gas guzzlers. This would mean additional layoffs. The 2007 agreement between Chrysler and the UAW creates a new dilemma for laid-off workers.

Several hundred in Michigan, now in the "job bank" and receiving most of their weekly pay, have been offered jobs at plants out-of-state. They have just four days to decide whether to move. After two years or the fourth offer, the worker who does not relocate will be treated as having quit, and will lose his or her job bank paycheck, health insurance, and right to be recalled when jobs open up.

Soon Ford workers will be forced to make similar painful decisions. Unlike Chrysler and GM workers, they will cease to be Ford employees after only the second offer of work at another plant.

One might have naively thought that the Big Three bosses would be grateful to their UAW-represented employees for the sacrifices they have made. Since 2005 well over 100,000 jobs have been eliminated, driving the active (employed) UAW membership to its lowest levels in over 60 years. The contracts signed last year, according to GM's figures, will slash labor

costs by 50 percent in the next four years. This represents a huge transfer of wealth—totaling about \$650,000 an hour—from the workers to the bosses. Even under the old contracts labor costs averaged only 8.4 percent of the price of a car or truck.

When is enough ever enough? Under capitalism, never. Profits are increased when the cost of labor power—compensation to the worker in the form of wages and benefits—is decreased.

The workers and the bosses are not, nor have they ever been, "one team." Mulally's message to the workers, stating that their "tireless efforts and commitment to our company are truly appreciated," is pure hogwash.

The drastic wage and benefit cuts the American Axle strikers reluctantly agreed to can only whet the appetites of the Big Three for more "sacrifices" on the part of the workers.

However, the incredible solidarity and power of the AAM workers during their 13-week strike, which shut down 30 GM plants and cost GM \$2.8 billion, points to tremendous possibilities. The crying need is for an unequivocal break with the fruitless strategy of cooperating with the companies, and for elevating the class struggle to a higher level among the hundreds of thousands who must revive the militant tradition of the United Auto Workers. □

Weak dollar, imperialist war push gas prices

By LeiLani Dowell

Across the country, workers are adjusting as best they can to unprecedented high gas prices. Many avoided their usual car trips over this Memorial Day weekend as gas prices reached a record nationwide average of \$3.88 per gallon—up 4 cents in one day and 65 cents higher than the previous year. Some have switched to public transportation, if available, as a means to get to work, school and grocery shopping.

Others are not as fortunate, with fewer options for public transportation in their towns. Cab drivers, mostly immigrant workers who face increasing gas prices but no fare increases, are in a particular bind. And while transportation is the main problem now, come winter many households will face increased heating oil prices as a result of the same forces pushing gas prices up.

Like the current food crisis, this crisis of increasing gas prices is global as well. Protests in ports around France, including the blockage of two oil refineries on May 23, have challenged high fuel prices. In Indonesia, student and political organizations organized protests in at least three parts of the country; thousands turned out and police arrested and brutalized dozens. (papernas-international.blogspot.com)

What’s going on?

While capitalist economists argue over the primary cause of the high gas prices, many agree that several factors are involved. One is the historic increase in the price of crude oil, which as of May 27 was almost \$129 per barrel—a jump of \$84 since 2004. According to the U.S. government, crude oil accounted for 70 percent of the cost of gas drivers paid at the pump

in the first quarter of the year. (Associated Press, May 24)

Another factor pushing up gas prices is speculative trading for oil futures contracts at worldwide stock exchanges. A futures contract is an agreement to buy or sell a commodity at a pre-determined price in the future.

Many analysts say that the increase in the price of oil futures has to do with the falling dollar. The Associated Press explains: “Oil is priced in U.S. dollars, and the weaker the dollar gets, the more attractive dollar-denominated oil contracts are to foreign investors—or any investor looking for a safe haven in the turbulent stock market. The rush of buyers keeps pushing oil futures to a series of new records, and the rest of the energy complex, including gasoline futures, has followed. That pushes up the price of gas that goes into your tank.” (May 24)

There’s no question that the fall of the dollar is a big factor. Oil-producing countries that get paid in dollars are increasingly buying goods and services from countries that use the euro or the yen. Unless they raise the dollar price of their oil, or demand it be paid for in a more stable currency, they will be losing money in their international commerce.

Top executives of the oil companies who testified to Congress a few days before the holiday weekend shrugged off any responsibility for the higher gas prices, blaming it all on the market. What they can’t hide, however, is that their monopoly control over the refining and distribution of petroleum products has allowed them to take record profits even as high prices create a real crisis for millions of workers.

Yet another factor in rising oil speculation involves the imperialist wars and aggression against Iraq, Iran and Vene-

zuela—a neocolonialist policy that has been aided and abetted by the oil companies in no small fashion. The military is a huge consumer of oil. Also, prices rise with concerns about reduced oil supplies from these areas.

The Associated Press reports: “Oil prices rose \$2.46 in one day last month amid reports a ship under contract to the Defense Department fired warning shots at two boats in the Persian Gulf that may have been Iranian. ... That same day, gas prices rose another 2.1 cents to a then-record national average of \$3.577 a gallon.” (May 24)

Contrary to popular belief, the culprit is not OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. OPEC has traditionally set limits on the production of oil by its member countries, so that the price of oil would be higher than in a “free” market. But these days, most member countries are producing to maximum capacity anyway, so the quotas mean little.

Furthermore, most refining is in the hands of the huge transnational oil companies, and they have not expanded refining capacity significantly since 1981. According to Department of Energy figures, world crude oil refining capacity in 1981 was 81.6 million barrels a day. In 2006, after a very big increase in world demand, it was 85.3 bbl/d. So calls on OPEC to pump more oil, like the one made recently by President Bush, are purely for political effect.

Devil in the design

The rising cost of gas would be less of an issue in the United States if the country were designed with the needs of its people in mind, as opposed to the auto and oil industry’s need for profits.

According to the American Public Trans-

portation Association, the use of public transportation in the U.S. saves almost 4 million gallons of gasoline a day, provides a “vital link” for the more than 51 million people with disabilities in the U.S., and provides the elderly with access to things they need in everyday life.

Yet SurveyUSA reports that in a recent national poll they conducted, “Only 15 percent of Americans who own or lease cars say mass transit is a convenient option for them; 50 percent say taking mass transit would be inconvenient—and for one out of every three Americans, there is no mass transit available at all to meet their needs.” (surveyusa.com)

In the 1920s, when only one in 10 people in the U.S. owned cars, General Motors conspired to successfully destroy 100 streetcar systems nationwide. Since then, the U.S. has evolved into a car-cultured country.

The ultimate solution to all the economic crises workers face depends on eliminating a system that carelessly trades their welfare on exchange markets. A socialist solution wouldn’t depend on the increased destruction of the environment, such as President George W. Bush’s call to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, or the use of food for fuel instead of feeding people, as with corn grown to produce ethanol. Socialist planning would take the needs of the people, and the earth, into account when allocating resources for public transportation.

In the meantime, the crisis shouldn’t be on the backs of the workers, but the bosses who created it. They should be taxed to cover the cost of fuel needed to get to work, and they should be forced to pay for improving the public transportation infrastructure throughout the country.

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ON THE PICKET LINE

Casino workers rally

On May 17 casino workers and their supporters demonstrated at Foxwoods to demand that management recognize the United Auto Workers union as their official bargaining agent. Supporters from all over New England came to Connecticut to show solidarity with the workers, who voted to join the union last November and want to sign their first contract.

On June 21 the labor movement plans to rally at noon in downtown Atlantic City in support of casino dealers, slot technicians, keno and simulcast employees and other workers who are demanding fair contracts. (UAW press release, May 20) For more information, contact the UAW AC/Dealers at 609-340-0006.

Railroad worker wins \$1.2 million injury suit

Railroad conductor James Kroon was injured July 3, 2003, when a 150-pound cab door fell off rusted hinges and knocked him off the car onto the ground 12 feet below. Because he feared being fired if he reported the injury, Kroon didn’t fill out a report form. When he finally requested a medical leave four months later, railroad officials told him to say the injury occurred off duty so he could collect 80 percent of his pay through worker’s comp. Only after he was disqualified from working by the railroad in 2006 did he report what really happened. It only took a Milwaukee County Circuit Court jury a little over six hours to rule in his favor. Kroon is due to receive \$1.2 million from Wisconsin Central/Canadian National Railroad. (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 19) □

Women United for Action launch price rollback campaign

Editor’s note: Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we will share with our readers some of the paper’s content over the past half century. The following article was written in 1972 by Fran Meyers on conditions that led to the founding of Women United for Action—high food prices in light of a wage freeze and high unemployment. Today, food prices in the U.S. have risen over 5 percent over the past year and are expected to rise 4 percent annually according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

New York, July 8—As unemployment lines are getting longer, and wages being virtually frozen, prices continue to soar with no end in sight. While the corporation-controlled Pay Board has actually ordered some workers to pay back raises termed “excessive,” the Price Commission, also serving big business, has done nothing to roll back outrageous prices. Why don’t they pay back the consumers for having been cheated at stores for years? Day after day, shopping for food is becoming more and more of a struggle for millions of people trying to stretch the dollar to nourish their families.

In the face of this increasingly desperate situation, Women United for Action, a recently formed organization, has launched a campaign—Operation Food Price Rollback—against the rising food prices, calling for price rollbacks on all items.

As a first step in this campaign Women

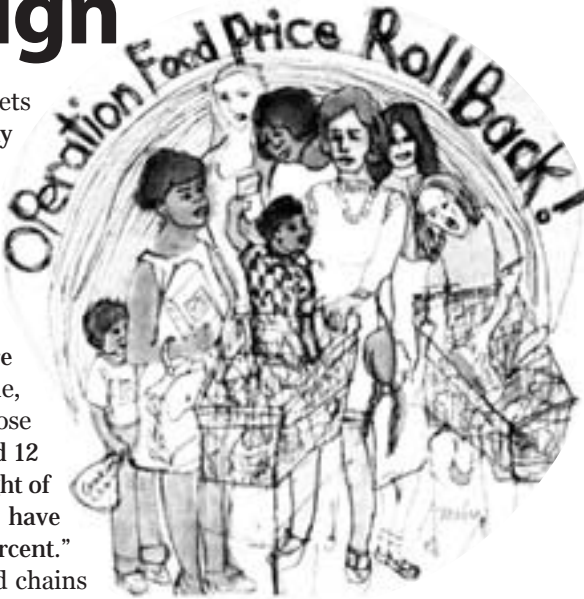
United began distributing leaflets in English and Spanish here today in front of a Key Food supermarket located in the Lower East Side. The headline of the leaflet read: “Sale! 25% Off—If We Fight For It!” The leaflet points out that the owners of the food chains have been raking in more profits than ever. Last year alone, “Agribusiness’s after-tax profits rose 15 percent as food prices jumped 12 percent. ... Since 1967, at the height of the war in Vietnam, food prices have skyrocketed by more than 25 percent.” The leaflet also states, “The food chains blame ‘increasing production and labor costs’ for the outrageous prices they charge, although today’s mass production and mechanization in the food industry should bring the prices down instead of up.”

While almost every neighborhood is affected by the rising prices, supermarkets in poor neighborhoods charge higher prices for inferior quality foods than those located in the richer neighborhoods. Women on welfare are forced to pay even higher prices due to price markups on days when they receive welfare checks. Women United for Action is also fighting against these injustices. The demands listed on their leaflet are:

We demand an immediate 25 percent rollback on food prices.

We want chain stores to charge the same prices in all neighborhoods.

We want sanitary conditions—no roaches and rats in the stores.



GRAPHIC BY MEIRA POMERANZ

We want an end to food packaging that just adds to bulk and cost and hides faults in substandard food.

We want stores to hire enough checkers and packers from the community at decent wages.

Stop markups of prices on welfare check days on the 1st and 16th when welfare recipients are forced to shop.

Women United received a friendly response from shoppers as well as some Key Food workers, with some women adding their particular grievances against the store. While Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, arrogantly blames the inflated prices on “Mrs. Housewife who is willing to pay the price for good beef,” Women United for Action hopes to offer a vehicle for millions of women and men shoppers to tell Mr. Butz, as well as the owners of these multimillion dollar food chains, what prices we are willing to pay. □



Despite federal consent decrees

Detroit still struggles against police brutality

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

When New York City police were absolved of criminal culpability in the killing of Sean Bell, the continuing problems of law-enforcement misconduct and criminality gained nationwide attention. In an obvious response to mass protests and condemnation of the acquittal of these cops, the New York City Police Department announced that there would be an internal investigation into the conduct of the officers who were found not guilty in a bench trial.

In subsequent weeks a videotaped beating of several African-American men by police in Philadelphia brought about the termination of some of the officers involved. Similar to the Rodney King incident of 1991, if there had been no videotaping of the beating, it is highly unlikely that any action would have been taken against these officers.

A trial in Atlanta involved another egregious case of police terrorism when a 92-year-old woman, Kathryn Johnston, was gunned down by the police when they mistakenly raided her home in a purported search for illegal drugs. One of the officers connected to this killing pled guilty to perjury.

African Americans, Latin@s, young people, LGBT communities and other oppressed groups in the United States know and understand the dangers of police brutality. In most cases, police are allowed to get away with blatant violations of the law when they insult, rob, assault, maim and kill people without provocation and walk free absent of any fear of prosecution or the loss of their jobs.

In the city of Detroit, police brutality has been an important part of the repressive apparatus of the ruling class. In 1967, the community rose up in rebellion after police raided a private party being held for a soldier returning from Vietnam.

During the 1970s the ascendancy of the first African-American mayoral administration of Coleman A. Young (1974-1993) was in response to a mass struggle for the abolition of a racist police decoy unit known then as STRESS (Stop Robberies and Enjoy Safe Streets). Young, a state

senator in 1973, had been a left-wing labor organizer for the National Negro Labor Councils in the aftermath of World War II. He had been brought before the House Un-American Activities Committee during the early 1950s, where he defied their attempted interrogation and became a respected activist in the city.

Under the Young administration there was at least a perception that police brutality was on the decline. However, during the second Black administration in the city under Dennis W. Archer (1994-2001), a more moderate political figure, there was a sharp rise in police killings of Detroit residents.

A Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality (DCAPB) was formed in 1996-1997. The organization documented acts of law-enforcement misconduct and brutality, held demonstrations outside police precincts and the main headquarters downtown. The DCAPB created an atmosphere where the City Council was forced to hold a public hearing on police misconduct in late 1997.

By 2000 the situation involving police-community relations became so outrageous that activists began to call for the resignation of Mayor Archer and the then police chief, Benny Napoleon. That summer a deaf man, Errol Shaw, Sr., was shot down dead in front of his mother on the northwest side of the city while she pleaded for the white police officer to refrain from firing his weapon.

Assessing the ongoing struggle to end police brutality

Several months later Mayor Archer announced that his administration would welcome a Justice Department investigation of the police department. Archer did not seek a third term in 2001. Kwame Kilpatrick was elected that year and in 2003 the Department of Justice announced its finding which indicated that there were serious violations of federal civil rights laws taking place through the operations of the Detroit Police Department in the areas of the use of lethal force and the deplorable conditions found in the city lockups.

Judge Julius Cook was appointed to enforce two federal consent decrees which mandated drastic reforms in the

operations of the police department in Detroit. A private firm, Kroll, Inc., was appointed to monitor the city's compliance over a five-year period with what was required by the Justice Department. A motion to intervene in the monitoring process was filed by the DCAPB in 2003; however, the motion was denied by Judge Cook.

Since 2003, the city has failed to implement the reforms mandated by the two federal consent decrees. Members of the DCAPB continue to emphasize that it will require a mass struggle against law-enforcement misconduct to effectively address the need for ending abusive behavior by local area cops.

In a recent interview with Ron Scott and Sandra Hines, leaders of the DCAPB, it was acknowledged that the federally-appointed monitor, Kroll Associates, had not taken any effective action to force the local police department to finally resolve the issues uncovered by years of harassment, abuse, assault and murder.

Pointing to the successes of the DCAPB's work, the organization stated that there had been advancements made in mobilizing large numbers of people to fight police misconduct and terrorism. In addition, Scott and Hines stated that, "We have broadened our political analysis, effectively utilized the mass media to increase awareness and consciousness about police brutality. Moreover, we have educated our constituency about the origins and character of police violence against people and that they have been effective in court monitoring, legislative advocacy and the pressuring of the local Board of Police Commissioners which is appointed by the mayor."

The DCAPB representatives also stated that, "We have defeated a City of Detroit panhandling ordinance, publicized the necessity of ending police chases that endanger people's lives, defeated on a state level a legislative effort to impose the death penalty in Michigan, and supported cab drivers' rights to equitable access to passengers in the city and to end police intimidation and harassment of taxi drivers."

Hines and Scott went on to say that, "The DCAPB challenged the Greentown Merchants Association downtown and

City administration fails to meet reform deadlines in reducing deadly force and cleaning up the deplorable conditions in the lock-ups

their so-called 'Men-in-Black' private security guards who were actively engaged in assaulting the homeless population in the entertainment district. We have worked in conjunction with several organizations to establish a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness."

Through its weekly radio broadcast entitled "Fighting For Justice," which is heard over the local Air America affiliate on 1310 AM, WDTW, the DCAPB utilizes this access to the mass media to both inform the public about the ongoing problems of police terrorism and to effectively mobilize the public to fight law enforcement, the city administration and the courts, which provide no justice for the victims of this state sanctioned violence.

According to Ron Scott, "It is necessary for us to build a real parallel institution focusing on more research, discipline and resource-gathering. We must balance the nationalization of policing with stronger organizational and political efforts which counter government agencies."

Scott and Hines concluded by emphasizing that, "Police and governmental agencies are responding by centralizing and transforming their approach. We must be smart and agile enough to respond and extend our program beyond what we have been able to achieve in the current situation."

For more information on the activities of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, people locally can listen to the "Fighting for Justice" radio program every Sunday morning from 10:00-11:00 a.m. over WDTW, AM 1310. Write to the DCAPB at 220 Bagley Ave., Ste. 808, Detroit, MI 48226 or call 313.963.8116 or e-mail detcoalition@sbcglobal.net. To read the quarterly reports of Kroll's monitoring of the Detroit Police Department's lack of compliance with the federal consent decrees just log on to <http://www.kroll.com/about/library/detroit/>

E-mail the writer at ac6123@wayne.edu.

Atlanta cop convicted in Kathryn Johnston's death

By **Dianne Mathiowetz**
Atlanta

In cities and towns across the U.S., every year hundreds of people are killed at the hands of police. Almost without exception, the deaths are ruled justified no matter how questionable the circumstances. It is a rare case when the facts are even revealed in a public courtroom.

On May 20, a Fulton County jury found Arthur Tesler, one of the members of the Atlanta drug squad involved in the death of 92-year-old Kathryn Johnston, guilty of lying during an official investigation. He was acquitted of two other charges including violation of oath of office.

Two days later, Judge Michael Johnson rendered the sentence before a packed courtroom. The former police officer will serve four years and six months in prison,

6 months of probation and perform 750 hours of community service. This was the maximum penalty for the charge.

Previously, two other police members, Gregg Junnier and J.R. Smith, pled guilty to charges of voluntary manslaughter and federal civil rights violations. Faced with possible murder charges, the conditions of their deal reduced their maximum jail time to 10 and 12 years respectively. They have yet to be sentenced.

The truth surrounding the killing of Ms. Johnston only came to light because of the actions of Alex White, a confidential informant who refused to go along with the coverup story devised by Smith, Junnier and Tesler.

In the early evening of Nov. 21, 2007, the three cops secured a "no-knock" warrant based on deliberately false information provided to the judge for a house at

933 Neal St. Within an hour, the bogus drug raid had taken place and the elderly woman lay dead with six bullets having struck her down. In the barrage of 39 shots, three members of the drug squad were also hit.

The coverup story began immediately. The fatally wounded woman was handcuffed. Drugs were planted in the basement. The panicky cops repeatedly called White, pressing him to verify their story that he had bought drugs from that location earlier in the day, a key element contained in their phony warrant.

Instead, White called federal agents and exposed the web of lies on local TV news.

The revelations of corruption and illegal procedures caused the drug unit to be disbanded and the FBI took over the investigation of Ms. Johnston's death.

For weeks, Tesler and the other two continued to lie to investigators with elaborate details of how they had observed drugs being bought at Ms. Johnston's house. White's credibility was challenged since he had an arrest record as a small-time drug dealer.

The Atlanta police hierarchy claimed to have no knowledge of the routine abuses committed, such as planting seized drugs to boost arrest and conviction rates. However, at community meetings following the shooting, residents of the poor and working-class area spoke bitterly about the tactics of the mask-wearing drug squad unit, threatening and harassing people of all ages.

On the day the jury convicted Tesler, dozens of Atlanta police as well as members of other state agencies were racing their cars through Ms. Johnston's

Philadelphia rally protests May 5 police beatings

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

Over 200 family members of victims of police brutality and their supporters gathered to express outrage over the May 5 brutal beating of three Black men by 19 white police officers caught on video from a FOX29 news helicopter. The protesters denounced city officials for not filing criminal charges against the officers involved.

One day earlier, Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey announced that four of the officers would be fired for their part in the beatings, and three others would face five to 15 days suspension. Sgt. Joseph Schiavone, who was in charge of the police involved, was demoted.

Given the history of unpunished police brutality in Philadelphia, few expect the firings and suspensions to withstand arbitration hearings. The Fraternal Order of Police has already announced they will challenge Ramsey's ruling.

Over the past five years 219 claims of assault have been filed against Philadelphia police. The City of Philadelphia has paid over \$14 million to settle claims, yet no police have ever faced criminal charges for their actions.

D. Scott Perrine, attorney for Pete Hopkins, one of the men beaten, said Commissioner Ramsey should order the officers to be arrested for assault—a view echoed by many members of the victims' families. "The commissioner is putting his stamp of approval on police brutality," Perrine said. "He doesn't need to pretend that District Attorney Lynne Abraham needs six months to watch a video tape."

Perrine was targeted by police shortly after he spoke. He was arrested in Harrisburg, Pa., for missing a court date in another case that he had asked to be postponed. Karen Miller, a North Philly community activist who has been working with Perrine to address police brutality, said she believed his arrest was retaliatory. "We know the deal," she said. "People in law enforcement stick together."

After gathering across from City Hall at 15th and Market, the protesters marched a short distance to rally outside District Attorney Abraham's office. Several speakers noted that she has the authority to bring criminal charges against the police involved, but has failed to do so.

Pam Africa of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal

neighborhood; stripping the clothes off African-American youth, allegedly looking for gang tattoos; and stopping people on the sidewalks and in their yards, demanding identification. Just up the hill from 933 Neal St, the rampaging police killed a man's dog when they came onto his property. According to the residents, this went on from morning until night.

An angry Diana Meyers, who lives not far from Ms. Johnston's street, stated, "We're tired of this police terrorism. They're trying to scare us into not speaking out. Justice wasn't done in this case. Ms. Johnston's life should mean more than a slap on the wrist to a few cops."

Meanwhile, the families of other victims of police killings in metro Atlanta, including 12 shot by Dekalb County police in a single year and a youth killed last week in Cobb County, continue to demand justice for their loved ones. □

and the MOVE organization expressed disgust with police, "Those cops abused their power. They were not supposed to beat those youth, maim those youth. They were not supposed to be judge, prosecutor and executioner, but that's what they did."

Leomia Dyches, mother of beating victim Dwayne Dyches, 24, criticized the media that claimed the three youth were "raised as animals" when they know nothing about how her son and the others were raised. "How were the people who beat my son raised?" she asked. Dyches also expressed concern that her son hasn't even been hospitalized to get an assessment on injuries suffered from the police attack and could develop serious health problems as a result.

She criticized their lockup as a coverup for misconduct by "Philadelphia's finest."

Beating victims including Dyches; Brian Hall, 23; and Pete Hopkins, 19, who police charged with attempted murder, are being held pending a preliminary hearing, which was postponed from May 15 after three witnesses for the prosecution failed to show up in court. No weapon was found in the young men's car. Also none of the three were charged with fleeing, resisting arrest or assaulting an officer.

Shelly Moore, the aunt of another Black youth murdered by the police in 2004, expressed her solidarity. "Every time they shoot one of us, it affects all of us. Justice is going to be done in all of these cases. Won't be today, won't be tomorrow, but we're going to stay out here—stay the course. We've got to keep fighting!"

Shirley Hopkins, mother of Pete Hopkins, called for the jailing of all the police involved, along with the commissioner and the district attorney. "They think they can pacify us with a few firings.



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Yolanda Dyches, family member of May 5th police brutality victim.

How dare they insult our intelligence?"

Several speakers cited the lack of jobs and economic opportunities for young Black men as a related problem. Yolanda Dyches noted that the young men arrested had jobs, but were fired because of the police actions. "They want to hold us back, oppress us," she said. "It needs to end!"

Paula Peoples of the National Action

Network announced plans for a June 4th demonstration and press conference at noon outside the Federal Building at 6th and Market Streets to demand an investigation by the Philadelphia Civil Rights Commission. "All over the country our young Black men are dying at the hands of the police. We have to stand up like New York, like Chicago, like L.A." □

United Nations official holds hearing on racism

By **Dolores Cox**
Harlem, N.Y.

On May 22, a U.N. Special Rapporteur (Reporter), Doudou Diene, held a public hearing at the Schomburg Center in Harlem for the purpose of investigating racism and intolerance in the United States. His visit was sponsored by the December 12th Movement's International Secretariat.

The first U.N. Special Rapporteur investigation on racism in the U.S. took place in 1994. Today, the globalized capitalist economy of the U.S. is in even worse shape than it was back then. White supremacist racism continues to be insidious and persistent.

In 2001 at the U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, issues of the "recognition of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery as a crime against humanity; of reparations for descendants of the victims of slavery; and of the economic basis of racism" were lobbied. In 2009 the U.N. will hold a world conference to review the 2001 Durban World Conference Against Racism. There will be preparatory meetings held prior to the review.

Diene, who is Senegalese, is an independent expert elected by a U.N. committee. For the past eight years he has been going around the world taking testimony.

He visits various countries to investigate matters of human rights (violence against women, torture, government abuses, political prisoners, racism, etc.).

Diene noted that there is an increase in racism, xenophobia, discrimination and ethnic violence worldwide. Thus far this year, he has visited approximately 25 countries as part of this mandate. New York and Washington, D.C., are on his list for this year.

He has asked, among other things, what the U.S. is doing to combat its historical foundation and legacy of racism; how race is a factor in this year's election; and what is being done specifically to root out and eradicate racist policies and programs in our society. He added that racism is a threat to democracy.

At the four-hour hearing in Harlem, Diene posed four questions to the community: Is there racism in the U.S.? Who are the victims and the communities? What are the manifestations and expressions of racism (political, social, economic)? and What are the solutions to eradicate racism? He publicly posed these questions to the U.S. government and requested that they report back to him. After receiving reports from both community and government he announced that he will analyze the responses and formulate a position for the U.S. and the U.N. to take.

When the floor was open to the audi-

ence, both individuals and organizations were invited to speak. Testimony was provided by Valerie Bell, Sean Bell's mother; Damien Brown, a Bell family attorney and former Bronx prosecutor; Dr. Adelaide Sanford, retired NYS Board of Regents Vice Chancellor; Rev. Wilson, St. Luke AME Church pastor and City Council Task Force on Hate Crimes member; Atty. Michael Warren on Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners; Philadelphia's "On the Move" Communications Director on police brutality; December 12th Movement Mental Health Committee; Coalition to Save Harlem; Director of Sankofa Empowerment; Haitian and Latin@ immigrants; Muslim community activists on post 9/11; and students and professors/teachers from N.Y.C. and Yonkers public schools, Columbia University, and CUNY and SUNY colleges.

At the end of the hearing, Diene invited anyone else wanting to provide testimony to contact him at Special Rapporteur on Racism, Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais Wilson, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Or via e-mail: sr-racism@ohchr.org. Copies of any information sent to Diene also can be sent to the December 12th Movement International Secretariat, 456 Nostrand Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11216 or D12m@aol.com.

The writer is an International Action Center activist in New York.

Protest set as Puerto Rican activist subpoenaed

By Arturo J. Pérez Saad

While Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Hussein Obama campaign for the June 1 Democratic primary in Puerto Rico, one can question why Puerto Ricans can vote for the Democratic nominee but not for president of the U.S. The hypocritical millions of dollars wasted in propaganda to support these two imperialist candidates on Puerto Rican soil expose what Puerto Rico really is: a U.S. colony much like Guam.

One can also ask why the Puerto Rican government isn't using those millions to pay living wages to the school teachers or reducing the cost of perishable products at a time when the Puerto Rico economy is superfrail.

What also exposes Puerto Rico's colonial status as the electoral spectacle brings attention to the island is the repressive

apparatus of the U.S. federal government lashing out in its attempt to silence the pro-independence movement. Since December 2007 at least five pro-independence Puerto Ricans have been visited or sought out on the U.S. mainland by federal authorities. Four have been cited to appear before the most anti-democratic juridical apparatus—the grand jury—where one does not have a right to have legal representation present.

The government subpoenaed Julio Pabón, Christopher Torres, Tania Frontera and the latest, on May 13, Elliot Monteverde Torres. A statement from the Hostos Jan. 11 Grand Jury Resistance Campaign describes Monteverde Torres as living “with his wife and daughter in Texas and ... from the Bronx, N.Y. He was a student leader in the U.S., a lawyer and a distinguished leader of the movement in solidarity with Vieques in New York.”

Vieques is an island that is part of Puerto Rico that was used for bombing practice by the Pentagon for decades.

On May 22, the date set for Monteverde Torres to appear in federal court in Brooklyn, N.Y., was postponed until May 30. The campaign has called for a 9:30 a.m. demonstration on Thursday, May 30, in front of the Brooklyn Federal Court at Cadman Plaza.

Simultaneous pickets will take place in Puerto Rico and Chicago denouncing grand jury repression, supporting those who refuse to cooperate with the grand jury and calling for the FBI to stop the harassment of the Puerto Rican community and to get out of Puerto Rico.

This new wave of repression comes at a time when the U.S. government has closed the case investigating the FBI killing of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos in Hormigueros, Puerto Rico, on Sept. 23, 2005. Ojeda

Ríos was a leader of the Ejército Popular Boricua-Macheteros.

Puerto Rico's Commission of Civil Rights, an official legislative body, is pushing forward with its own investigation of Ojeda Ríos' killing. The CCR has unearthed contradictory statements from the head of the FBI, Luis Fraticelli; the head of the National Police, Pedro Toledo; and the head of the municipal police of Hormigueros, Nelson Cuevas, as to what happened when Ojeda Ríos was killed. (El Diario New York, May 23-24)

This is in hopes for justice to prevail on behalf of the Ojeda Ríos family and for the independence movement—so that these extrajudicial killings will not go unpunished with impunity, like the authorities who killed the two pro-independence youth in 1978 in Cerro Maravilla, Puerto Rico. □

Civil suit exposes U.S. role in Haitian massacres

By G. Dunkel

The history of Haiti has been marked by stubborn, lengthy and mass resistance and struggle to achieve justice against heavy odds. From its beginning in 1791, when the severely oppressed African slaves of the French colony of Saint-Domingue rose up, to 1804, when the independence of Haiti was proclaimed in Gonaïves, the struggle was against the mighty French army. From 1915 to 1934, Haitians had to struggle against occupation by U.S. Marines.

In 1957 François Duvalier became president. He and his son Jean-Claude ruled with violence, repression and the strong military backing of the U.S. government until 1986, when a mass uprising, which Haitians call the “uprooting” (dechoukaj), drove them from power. One of the major protests in this uprising occurred in 1985 in Gonaïves, during which three school children were killed.

The U.S. came back in 1994 and 2004, though it used some fig leaves from the United Nations to disguise its occupations; it used the Haitian army to depose democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 and a so-called

“democratic” opposition to overthrow Aristide again in 2004.

The opposition to the first coup against Aristide was so strong and so determined that the army had to set up a paramilitary organization called FRAPH (Haitian Kreyol for “blow”) to crush it. The exact role the U.S. played in setting up FRAPH is not officially clear, since the U.S. seized the FRAPH archives in 1994. But its leader, Toto Constant, admitted on CBS “60 Minutes” that he was a paid CIA agent when he set up and ran FRAPH. Constant openly lived in New York City in the 1990s, even though he was wanted in Haiti for mass murder.

While FRAPH was active, it reportedly killed more than 4,000 Haitians in a series of vicious massacres. In April of 1994, one of the most violent massacres took place in Raboteau, a very poor neighborhood in Gonaïves, a stronghold of support for Aristide. The total number of people who were killed there is unknown because bodies were thrown into the sea or buried in unmarked graves.

In 2000 the survivors of the Raboteau massacre brought a criminal and civil case against 31 leaders of the Haitian army

during the first coup, leaders and agents of FRAPH, which led to their conviction on charges of premeditated, voluntary murder. This conviction is very unusual for Haiti, because generally the victims of state-condoned violence are charged with crimes by the perpetrators.

This conviction testifies to the depth of anger over this massacre and the organizing by the Raboteau survivors, along with substantial help from Brian Concannon of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti and Mario Joseph from the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI)—a group of local and international lawyers who represent victims of human rights violations in Haiti.

Former Col. Carl Dorélien is one of the convicted defendants in the 2000 trial who had fled to Florida with the obvious connivance of the CIA, which wants to protect its Haitian “assets.” A few years ago, Dorélien won \$3.2 million in the Florida lottery and came to the attention of the Center for Justice and Accountability, a progressive San Francisco law firm.

They, along with the Raboteau Victims Association, began a civil case against Dorélien in the U.S. courts. This past May

16, after exhausting all his appeals, over \$400,000 was distributed in Raboteau and he was ordered to pay a total of \$4.3 million to the plaintiffs in compensatory and punitive damages.

“The damage award is a victory for all Haitians,” said Mario Joseph, the managing attorney of the BAI, and the lead lawyer for the Raboteau Victims Association. “The Raboteau Trial in Haiti built faith in justice, because it showed that poor people were able to use the courts to protect their rights against the rich and powerful.”

It is indeed a victory, but Dorélien and his fellow mass murderers should face more punishment for their crimes than just a fine.

And while the victims of the Raboteau massacre have received a measure of justice, Concannon, speaking on the WBAI program, “Haiti: The Struggle Continues,” said that at least a hundred, and perhaps many more, political prisoners, mainly Fanmi Lavalas (Aristide's political party) members arrested under the interim government that came in after the second coup against Aristide, are still in prison. The struggle in Haiti indeed continues.

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Exploiting a human tragedy

I thought I was the only one who felt this way, given the giant shadow cast by the U.S. propaganda machine. But Sara Flounders' piece on the Myanmar cyclone hit the nail on the head. [“U.S. hostility hampers relief,” May 22]

When it concerns Myanmar there seems to be an overarching ideology that shapes nearly all Western (and Westernized) media interpretation of events. Everyone seems to be of the same mind-set, underlying which is an uncritical, zealous, evangelical crusade regarding what the U.S. considers “democracy.”

It began with the 1988 riots in Myanmar, continued to percolate throughout the past 20 years with other incidents, then escalated with the riots of September 2007. Now the recent cyclone has brought Myanmar once again into the political limelight, when the focus should have been a humanitarian one. All these events of the past 20 years have been placed within a stock, “good versus evil” framework of analysis, so that not only are the differences amongst them not acknowledged, the conclusions are predictable and self-fulfilling as well.

As Sara Flounders points out, exploitation of this terrible tragedy was by design. At the White House press conference called almost immediately after the cyclone hit Myanmar, Mrs. Bush began by politicizing the disaster right off the bat. One sentence was spent on the tragedy, the rest of the press conference was on her political agenda of regime change.

The dominant American and other English language media reports followed the White House cue, which was repeated ad nauseam during the next two weeks. The image of the Burma government was made to fit that crafted during the past 20 years, even in such a disaster where nearly 130,000 lives were reportedly lost. Whatever the Burma government did was ipso facto considered to have had evil intentions.

One correspondent who belongs to the dominating “Foreign Corresponden[ts] Club” in Bangkok once told me that any positive news coming out of Myanmar is suppressed as part of its credo.

Congress and other organizations with a similar “consolidated vision” have pumped in more than \$200 mil-

lion during these past 20 years to create this image. So-called “private organizations” such as the Soros Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy (run by ex-State Department types), but with the same mind-set, contributed also; the latter allotting \$40,000 in its 2006 budget for Myanmar monasteries. This was to be used for “educating” Burmese monks about how to hold “democratic” demonstrations. Is it any surprise the riots led by a small group of bogus monks and “outlaw monasteries” occurred shortly thereafter? (I wonder how much the U.S. has spent in the 60 odd years on its propaganda regarding little Cuba?)

Most of the money allotted by Congress annually goes to support dissident groups and their propaganda, usually “newspapers” (such as the “Irrawaddy” located in Thailand) and lobby groups with press and government connections. Since these news groups live in dozens of different countries and write from there, it appears as if there's a grassroots groundswell of opposition to the govern-

Letter to the Editor

ment in Burma when it is really only a small group whose livelihood depends on these funds. (In fact, they remind me of the Miami Cuban community with regard to Cuba.)

Thus, one of the reasons reconciliation is not the objective of these groups is that if that occurred, their cash cow would be eliminated. What they are pushing for instead is regime change. But if one thinks that'll bring peace and cooperation, law and order, and improve the lives of most of the ordinary people in Myanmar, think again. Most likely such a scenario will result in civil war in which the bulk of the casualties will be civilians and of course “easy pickins” for the U.S.

Oil and gas is a factor, as Ms. Flounders points out. But control of, or direct access to the Straits of Malacca—the fastest and easiest way to and from the Bay of Bengal to the Pacific, with the borders of Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia on the Straits—may be another reason.

Also using the old cold war policy

Continued on page 9

Doha pact codifies Bush setback in Lebanon

By John Catalinotto

The agreement negotiated among contending Lebanese parties in Doha, Qatar, on May 21 reflects the military and political victory of the progressive Hezbollah-led opposition in Lebanon over the Bush regime and its clients in the Lebanese government. The victory came in early May after the pro-imperialist government had made an aggressive provocation against Hezbollah.

The goal of this provocation was to disarm the Lebanese groups that resisted Israeli attacks or, failing that, to promote fighting along sectarian lines in Lebanon. The pro-imperialist forces underestimated the mass support for Hezbollah and its allies and overestimated its own strength. Hezbollah's lightning victory handed U.S. imperialism a sharp setback and led to the agreement.

Because it led the struggle in the south of Lebanon that expelled Israeli occupation forces in 2000 and also led the Lebanese resistance that stopped another bloody Israeli invasion in 2006, Hezbollah enjoys mass popularity throughout the Middle East. This includes broad support within Lebanon, even from outside its mass base in the poverty-stricken Shi'ite community south of Beirut.

Hezbollah's allies include another Shi'ite-based group named Amal, the Lebanese Communist Party and the former military and Christian leader, Gen. Michel Aoun. More than any other mass organization, this coalition represents the oppressed masses and the working class in Lebanon.

On the other side, Washington, Tel Aviv and the Arab regimes that collaborate with imperialism—Saudi Arabia and Egypt, for example, as well as many wealthy rightist Lebanese—treat Hezbollah as a threat to their regimes' stability.

Under Lebanon's sectarian system, the

president is always a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of parliament a Shi'ite Muslim.

Gen. Michel Suleiman, head of the Lebanese army, was named president of Lebanon on May 25 in Beirut. After the army refused to intervene in the last round of fighting on either side, Suleiman became one of the few Maronite Christian political leaders acceptable to both the Lebanese regime and the opposition.

Suleiman's appointment, filling the president's post empty since November, was part of the Doha agreement. The other parts included that:

A new 30-person cabinet will consist of 16 seats for the pro-U.S. governing group known as the "March 14 Coalition," 11 seats for the Hezbollah-led opposition, and three to be named by Suleiman. This division should give the opposition veto power over important government decisions, but not enough power to press its own program. Fouad Siniora, the current prime minister, will step down, but the pro-Western forces will appoint the prime minister until at least 2009.

Washington, whose ambassador publicly endorsed the Doha agreement, had supported the Lebanese army and Siniora. The U.S. will surely continue its hostility to the Hezbollah-led opposition. Washington explains this hostility as opposition to the Syrian and Iranian

governments, but behind U.S. policy is imperialist fear of any mass organization fighting for liberation in the Middle East.

Regime makes concessions in Doha

In return for the Doha concessions, the Hezbollah-led opposition has already dismantled the tents that its members had set up in downtown Beirut 18 months earlier when they demanded one-third representation in the government for one-third of the population, an obviously fair democratic demand.

Hezbollah also won the reappointment of the director of security of the Beirut Airport and the right to maintain its own communications network, a valuable part of its defense force. This regime's attack on these two key elements of Hezbollah's defensive arsenal provoked the fighting in early May.

That provocation left Hezbollah no choice but to fight. When Hezbollah supporters took over most of Beirut in hours, it became apparent Bush and the March 14 Coalition had underestimated Hezbollah's political prestige. March 14 leader Walid Jumblatt then accused Hezbollah of trying to seize power.

In Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's last major address May 8, he answered Jumblatt's charge: "They accused us of wanting to take power, to attempt a coup d'état. But if they all come to hand over

power to us, we will tell them that we don't want this responsibility, the government has to be the responsibility of the entire country, not of a part or a group alone." By May 10, Hezbollah had handed Beirut back to the Lebanese army.

Washington has incited sectarian conflict in Iraq to prevent a united resistance from ending the U.S. occupation. The U.S. also promoted fighting between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas in Palestine to weaken that national movement. There is evidence U.S. imperialism will continue trying to apply this "divide and conquer" strategy in Lebanon.

A New York Times story on Lebanon published every incident its reporters could find that conceivably involved hostility between religious sects, apparently drumming up those sentiments against Hezbollah. (May 18)

Regarding the "divide and conquer" tactics, Nasrallah said in the same speech: "It is not a conflict between religions, but one between one force with a program of resistance, and one that is pro-colonialist. But they would like to make it seem like a religious conflict. Here there will never be a religious conflict between Sunni and Shiite, Christian, never, because there are many Sunni, Christian, Druze and Shiite leaders who are with the resistance and have made this position public."

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Cynthia McKinney on Israel

'Not in my name'

On May 16, Cynthia McKinney, former congresswoman from Georgia, who is vying for the presidential nomination on the Green Party ticket, spoke at a rally in opposition to the 60th anniversary of the founding of the pro-Zionist state of Israel, deemed Al Nakba (The Disaster) by the Palestinian people. The following are remarks made by McKinney at the rally outside of the United Nations.

On my birthday last year, I declared my independence from a national leadership that, through its votes in support of the war machine, is now complicit in war crimes, torture, crimes against humanity and crimes against the peace.

I declared my independence from every bomb dropped, every veteran maimed and every child killed.

I noted that the Democratic leadership in Congress had failed to restore this country to constitutional rule by repealing the Patriot Acts, the Secret Evidence Act and the Military Commissions Act.

That it had aided and abetted illegal spying against the American people. And that it took impeachment off the table.

In addition, the Democratic congressional leadership failed to promote the economic integrity of this country by not repealing the Bush tax cuts. They failed to institute a livable wage, Medicare-for-

all health care, and gave even more money to the Pentagon as it misuses our hard-earned dollars.

We can add to that list, too, an abject failure to stand up for human rights and dignity.

If the Democratic and Republican leadership won't respect the right of return for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita survivors, how can we expect them to champion the right of return for Palestinians?

If this country's leadership tolerates the wanton murder of unarmed Black and Latino men by law enforcement officials—extra-judicial killings—how can we expect them to stop or even speak out against targeted assassinations in the Middle East?

If the Democratic and Republican leadership accept ethnic cleansing in this country by way of gentrification and predatory lending, why should we expect them to put an end to it in Palestine?

If the leadership of this country impedes self-determination for Native peoples in this country, why should we expect them to support Indigenous rights for anyone abroad?

And sadly, the sensationalist corporate media would rather trick us into thinking that reporting on a pastor, a former vice presidential nominee and a former cable TV magnate constitutes this country's much-needed discussion of its own apartheid past and present, so why should we expect an honest discussion of apartheid and Zionism?

I hope by now it is clear. Our values will never be reflected in public policy as long as our political parties and our country remain hijacked.

Hijacked by false patriots who usurp the applause of the people and all the while betray our values.

I've decided that neither the



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO:

Cynthia McKinney

Democrats nor the Republicans will operate any longer as business as usual—not in my name.

That Democrats and Republicans will use my tax dollars and betray my values, not one day longer—not in my name; that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have earned my most precious political asset—my vote.

And that now is the time to do some things I've never done before in order to have some things I've never had before.

And so here today, I declare my independence from weapons transfers, including Apache helicopters; F16s; side-winder, hellfire and Stinger missiles.

I declare my independence from occupation, demolished homes, political prisoners and babies dying at checkpoints.

I declare my independence from U.N. vetoes, expropriated land, stolen resources and the installation of puppet regimes.

I declare my independence from all forms of dehumanization and I am not afraid to speak truth to power.

And I am happy to join with peace-loving people around the world who know that there can be no peace without justice.

Let us never tire in our work for justice. Thank you. □

MARKET ELECTIONS How Democracy Serves the Rich

By Vince Copeland

Every four years, big money chooses the presidential candidates. Their war chests filled to the brim, they are then packaged by the media as 'the people's choice.' It's U.S.-style democracy-of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. But how do these chosen politicians win the votes of the millions as well as the millionaires?

In this fascinating tour through the history of U.S. presidential elections, Vince Copeland explains the devious art of capitalist politics. And he shows how mass movements can upset even the best-laid plans of the "king-makers."

Who has been excluded from voting? How were electoral politics used to betray Black freedom after the Civil War?

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Spreading the truth worldwide

From the editors of Workers World

The imperialist monopoly of the major media outlets has aroused an angry reaction around the world, a search for alternate news and analysis of political events. Many look to the Web as almost their only possibility of finding a viewpoint that favors workers and oppressed peoples and many are finding this viewpoint in Workers World. WW articles have reached readers far beyond the English/Spanish-language print circulation of the weekly newspaper.

We hope this first report of our successes sparks ideas among our readers to spread these stories even further.

Within the U.S., WW articles get picked up by many progressive sites. The Pan African News Wire at panafricannews.blogspot.com and Axis of Logic at axisoflogic.com are two examples of important sites that often post WW articles. All WW articles may be published, without cost, if they are published in full and the source acknowledged.

Bryan Pfeiffer’s coverage of the American Axle strike, Mike Gimbel’s defense of Barry Bonds, our editorials on the presidential election—have been both printed and posted widely, as has Clarence Thomas’ description of the longshore strike on May Day.

Abroad, we are published in English in the print edition of the British-based newspaper, The New Worker (newworker.org) every few weeks. Articles are sometimes used by the progressive Canada-based magazine found on globalresearch.ca.

Our articles that draw the broadest attention are often those that challenge the corporate media’s lies. For example, managing editor Gary Wilson’s article on the China/Tibet crisis was quoted extensively in China Daily, leading to an additional half-million visits to the WW site. Friends have since translated this article into Portuguese, French, Italian and German, while our own Mundo Obrero editors translated it to Spanish.

Abayomi Azikiwe’s anti-imperialist analysis of the struggle in Zimbabwe was published in The Herald of Harare, Zimbabwe’s capital, this May. Sara Flounders’ article on Bush’s attempt to exploit the disaster in Myanmar was cited in a local Myanmar daily and then picked up all over.

Along with our own Spanish translations on workers.org, which are reposted on other sites, including corrienteroja.net, readers can find some of our articles in at least the following languages: Arabic, in the print edition of The Ba’ath, Syria; French on the michelcollon.info site; Portuguese on the Web magazines odiario.info and resistir.info, with edited versions in Avante, the weekly newspaper of the Portuguese Communist Party (avante.pt); Italian, translated by Curzio Bettio of the group Soccorso Popolare, found on various sites, for example, pane-rose.it; Dutch, in Manifest at ncpn.nl; Russian, with editor-in-chief Deirdre Griswold’s article on worldwide hunger and others posted at a Ukrainian workers’ newspaper site, proletar.org.ua; Korean and Chinese, occasionally.

Besides WW articles, a recent interview with Workers World Party’s Larry Holmes on the U.S. elections is in the May edition of the newspaper of the Pole of Communist Renaissance in France (PRCF). Teresa Gutierrez’s contribution to a conference in Mexico analyzing the struggle for immigrant rights was translated by the Tlaxcala translating collective and posted on tlaxcala.es and on rebellion.org. WW managing editor Monica Moorehead and anti-death penalty organizer Gloria Rubac collaborated for a major article in a French book on fascism and state repression, published by the PRCF.

Managing editor Leslie Feinberg’s articles and books on the lesbian/gay/bi/trans struggle and history have been translated into all the languages mentioned above, and more.

Versions of talks summarizing the first two sections of Fred Goldstein’s upcoming book, “Colossus with Feet of Clay,” have been translated to French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish and published on various sites and in Marxismo Militante, the magazine of the Bolivian Communist Party.

Goldstein’s summary, presented at the Fourth Marxism Seminar in Havana, Cuba, this May, was translated into Spanish by Mundo Obrero editor Berta Joubert-Ceci and has since been published on the rebellion.org site, often visited by the politically aware movement in much of Latin America. From Rebelión it was picked and posted on sites all over the continent, including ARGENPRESS.info and the site of the Communist Refoundation Party of Puerto Rico (refundacioncomunistapr.com).

If you have information of other sites we may not know of or ideas on how to spread WW articles, within and outside the U.S., write to jcat@workers.org. □

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‘We fought apartheid; we see no reason to celebrate it in Israel now!’

The following excerpts are from a May 17 statement signed by dozens of South Africans—governmental officials and activists—on the 60th anniversary of the founding of apartheid Israel. Organizations that have endorsed the statement are African National Congress, Al Quds Foundation, Anti-Privatisation Forum and its 28 affiliates, Azanian Peoples Organisation, Congress of South African Trade Unions, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, End Occupation Campaign, Groundworks, Media Review Network, Muslim Judicial Council, Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa, Not In My Name, Palestine Solidarity Alliance, Palestine Solidarity Committee, Palestine Solidarity Group, Social Movements Indaba, Socialist Party of Azania, South African Communist Party, South African Council of Churches. The full statement with all the signers can be found on the Web site of the Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation at www.endtheoccupation.org.za.

We, South Africans who faced the might of unjust and brutal apartheid machinery in South Africa and fought against it with all our strength, with the objective to live in a just, democratic society, refuse today to celebrate the existence of an Apartheid state in the Middle East.

While Israel and its apologists around the world will, with pomp and ceremony, loudly proclaim the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel this month, we who have lived with and struggled against oppression and colonialism will, instead, remember six decades of catastrophe for the Palestinian people. Sixty years ago, 750,000 Palestinians were brutally expelled from their homeland, suffering persecution, massacres, and torture. They and their descendants remain refugees. This is no reason to celebrate.

When we think of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, we also remember the Deir Yassin massacre of 1948.

When we think of South Africa’s Bantustan policy, we remember the bantustanisation of

Palestine by the Israelis.
When we think of our heroes who languished on Robben Island and elsewhere, we remember the 11,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails.

When we think of the massive land theft perpetrated against the people of South Africa, we remember that the theft of Palestinian land continues with the building of illegal Israeli settlements and the Apartheid Wall.

When we think of the Group Areas Act and other such apartheid legislation, we remember that 93 percent of the land in Israel is reserved for Jewish use only.

When we think of Black people being systematically dispossessed in South Africa, we remember that Israel uses ethnic and racial dispossession to strike at the heart of Palestinian life.

When we think of how the SADF troops persecuted our people in the townships, we remember that attacks from tanks, fighter jets and helicopter gunships are the daily experience of Palestinians in the Occupied Territory.

When we think of the SADF attacks against our neighboring states, we remember that Israel deliberately destabilizes the Middle East region and threatens international peace and security, including with its 100s of nuclear warheads.

We who have fought against Apartheid and vowed not to allow it to happen again cannot allow Israel to continue perpetrating apartheid, colonialism and occupation against the indigenous people of Palestine.

We dare not allow Israel to continue violating international law with impunity.

We will not stand by while Israel continues to starve and bomb the people of Gaza.

We who fought all our lives for South Africa to be a state for all its people demand that millions of Palestinian refugees must be accorded the right to return to the homes from where they were expelled.

Apartheid was a gross violation of human rights. It was so in South Africa and it is so with regard to Israel’s persecution of the Palestinians! □

Global unity and struggle discussed at forum

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

Working-class global unity was on display in Boston last week, when Teresa Gutierrez, a leader of the NYC May 1st Coalition for Immigrant & Workers Rights, spoke at a May 18 Workers World forum on labor-African American-immigrant solidarity. Local leaders of struggles who spoke included Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner; Josue Renaud, New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti; Bishop Felipe Teixeira, a national leader in the immigrant rights struggle; and Dario Zapata of the MLK Bolivarian Circle. Miya Campbell read the poetry of Langston Hughes at intervals throughout the meeting.

Gutierrez said: “We raised the banner of unity with the African-American community on the issue of justice for Sean Bell. When the verdict came out in New York, our coalition decided to put it on placards. But the people already had signs that said ‘NYPD = ICE’ [New York Police Department = Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. We talk a lot about Black-Brown unity. We have to get to the point where the immigration movement sees the connection between the anti-war movement, the labor movement and all struggles.

“People are dying in detention centers—66 in the past few years. Our struggle is against the class that brings all these problems. We owe it to all the people around the world struggling against imperialism to ratchet up the struggle. Even though May Day was born in this country, immigrants have

revived it and it has become a day that galvanizes the movement of labor and immigrant rights. So May Day represents tremendous gains.”

Chuck Turner connected the immigrant rights struggle to the growing Boston fight back against foreclosures in Boston. Turner had led the City Council in the unanimous passage of a just-cause eviction law that prohibits evictions from foreclosed buildings for three years in many cases.

“Housing should be a human right,” he declared, “not a speculative enterprise. It’s not enough to bring justice to those being scammed. We have to go to the next level to get a system of housing in this country that really works for the people.”

Josue Renaud spoke of mass demonstrations in Haiti on April 8 demanding that U.N. forces and the president leave. “Last year the president laid off 10,000 people. Each one supports 10 other people. When Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez visited last year 500,000 people took to the streets to greet him. We denounce the World Bank! Haitian people will fight for their rights!”

Dario Zapata, of MLK Bolivarian Circle said: “Here we breathe the air of solidarity. We are among friends in very difficult times. I am Colombian and here to tell you that the government of Colombia is criminal. The president is a member of the drug cartel and the paramilitary which ‘disappears’ anyone who opposes it. But today the opposition is stronger than ever! Our revolutionary process is going forward! We have the right to self-determination so that productive social forces can be liberated to benefit the people.” □

Africa Liberation Day & the legacy of global anti-imperialist movements

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

This May 25 marks the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), formed by over 30 newly-independent states in 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. That day was proclaimed Africa Liberation Day, a holiday that has since been commemorated all over the world including various countries in Africa as well as in the former Soviet Union, the United States, Canada, Europe and the Caribbean.

Prior to 1963 and the founding of the OAU, the African independence movement caught fire resulting in the anti-colonial struggle becoming the major engine for historical transformation on the continent after the conclusion of World War II, the revolutions in Korea, China, Vietnam and Cuba.

On April 15, 1958, the First Conference of Independent African States in Accra, Ghana, was convened by eight nations that had been successful in throwing off the yoke of direct colonialism. That day was proclaimed African Freedom Day and this year marks its 50th anniversary.

It was the burgeoning independence movement and the convening of the first conference of independent African states that created the conditions for the All-African Peoples Conference that was also held in Accra, Ghana, in December 1958. Ghana, at that time, was the vanguard of the national independence movement on the continent under the leadership of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

The first All-African People's Conference introduced the continent and world to the young and determined revolutionary leader Patrice Lumumba. It was Lumumba and his Congolese National Movement (MNC) that led the mineral-rich former Belgian colony to national independence.

His short-lived government immediately came under attack by the U.S. administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Lumumba was overthrown and later kidnapped and murdered at the hands of U.S.-backed operatives under the management of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The 1950s and 1960s ushered in a new phase of the anti-colonial struggle. This spirit of independence paralleled the civil rights movement in the U.S., where the African-American masses sought to overturn centuries of superexploitation and national oppression. The Pan-African revolutionary leader and socialist Kwame Nkrumah sought to link the struggles against racism, colonialism and imperialism throughout the continent and the world.

Nkrumah stated in his address to the Ghana National Assembly in response to the ratification efforts of the first annual conference of the OAU that: "The Afro-American has been taught to appreciate the dignity of the individual, living as he (she) does in one of the most technically advanced countries of our time; and yet at the same time he (she) is being denied what is his (her) essential and inalienable right. The Afro-American did not choose to go to the New World. He (she) was dragged into America to help establish the economy of that country. This he (she)

has done with great credit, distinguishing himself (herself) in all fields of human endeavour. In Music, Law, Diplomacy, Art, Science, Education, he (she) has achieved great distinction for America. The United States has therefore a moral duty to accept the essential humanity of the Afro-American." ("Revolutionary Path," 1973)

Historical advances in the African liberation struggle

Several African nations sought to go beyond the acquisition of national independence and to build an anti-capitalist state and economy. Countries such as Ghana, Guinea, Egypt, Algeria, Tanzania, Zambia and later Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, developed revolutionary liberation move-

ments and political parties that sought to break with the tentacles of world capitalism and imperialism.

As a result of these efforts, the imperialists struck back and launched destabilization campaigns, counterinsurgency operations and outright interventions through the manipulations of intelligence agencies and direct and indirect military occupations. The Nkrumah government in Ghana,

which held power between 1951 and 1966, was overthrown by a clique of military and police operatives financed and coordinated by U.S. imperialism.

Other nations such as Guinea-Bissau suffered targeted assassinations. Revolutionary and socialist theorist Amilcar Cabral was murdered on the eve of that nation's independence in 1973. When the U.S. and British-financed apartheid regime in South Africa attempted to reverse the independence of Angola under the leadership of the Popular Movement for Liberation (MPLA), the Cuban internationalists intervened in defense of the revolution and played a decisive role in the defeat of the racist South African Defense Forces (SADF) in both 1975-1976 as well as the final victory against their attempted occupation of Angola in 1987-1988.

This gallant period in African history has been documented in a recent BBC-produced film entitled "Cuba, Africa, Revolution." This historical account illustrates how a socialist internationalist government made tremendous sacrifices to destroy apartheid in southern Africa. This important episode in African history brought about the consolidation of Angolan independence after 1988; the liberation of Namibia in 1990, which suffered under South African colonialism for decades; and eventually the destruction of the racist apartheid system in 1994.

All during this period the U.S. and its allies sought to maintain colonial regimes and to halt the social advances of the national liberation movements which struggled to embark upon a socialist path. U.S.-controlled financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) tried to strangle the African revolution through imperialist control of the economic development within these states. The overall underdevelopment of African societies can be directly traced to the historic legacy of slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism.

In the U.S., the passage of civil rights laws during the 1950s and 1960s did not totally liberate the African Americans and other nationally oppressed groups. The most dedicated elements within the civil rights and Black Power movements were subjected to the counterintelligence program, through which leaders and their organizations suffered mass arrests, torture, targeted assassinations, chemical warfare through the proliferation of narcotics in their communities and the attempted criminalization of successive generations of African-American, Latin@ and working class youth.

Challenges of the contemporary situation in the African world

In the 21st century the machinations of imperialism have not subsided, but these schemes aimed at the continued exploitation of the natural resources and labor of the continent and its people have accelerated. Looking at the crisis in Zimbabwe, where the ruling African National Union, Patriot-Front Party (ZANU-PF) has been the target of a systematic campaign of destabilization and regime change, any genuinely independent observer will see that only the tactics have changed but the objective of the Western imperialist countries remains the same: to prevent Africa from becoming genuinely independent of imperialist domination and exploitation.

In Somalia, the U.S. has backed an invasion and occupation by the neighboring Ethiopian regime in order to prevent the masses from seeking a political dispensation independent of imperialist influence and control. The Ethiopian regime that is in power today represents the same forces which overturned the revolutionary gains of the 1970s and 1980s with the fall of Mengistu Haile Mariam who was supported by the former Soviet Union as well as Cuba.

Sudan, with its millions of barrels of oil reserves, is a focal point of U.S. and British intrigue designed to reclaim the ground lost by the growing independent character of the government and peoples

of this central African country. The overwhelming majority of African people are calling for the cancellation of the foreign debt obligations, the establishment of fairer terms of international trade and a halt to U.S., British and French military interventions on the continent. Consequently, this has resulted in the rejection of the U.S. military plans to establish an African Command (AFRICOM) on the continent.

The popular struggles within the labor movement, among youth, women and the increasing vocal land reform efforts in various regions of the continent, reflect the increasing awareness of the potential power of the people to take control of their social destinies and to forge an independent path towards economic and social development.

In the U.S. and Canada, the rapidly burgeoning repressive character of national oppression, exemplified by the persecution of the Jena 6, the terrorist police murders of Sean Bell and countless others as well as the systematic removal of hundreds of thousands of African and other working-class and poor people from the Gulf region resulting directly from the failure of the state to protect people in the face of disasters such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, has led to mass demonstrations.

What is becoming obvious to growing numbers of people inside the U.S. is that these problems of economic exploitation, national oppression and racist violence and mass incarceration cannot be solved under the current system of capitalism. Only the advances made under socialism in various geo-political regions throughout the world during the course of the people's history of the last century provide a model for genuine social transformation.

Therefore, it is through the struggle for socialism, where economic development will be based on the material needs of the working people within society, that national and gender oppression will be eradicated. This struggle will set the stage for the true liberation of the immense majority of humanity.

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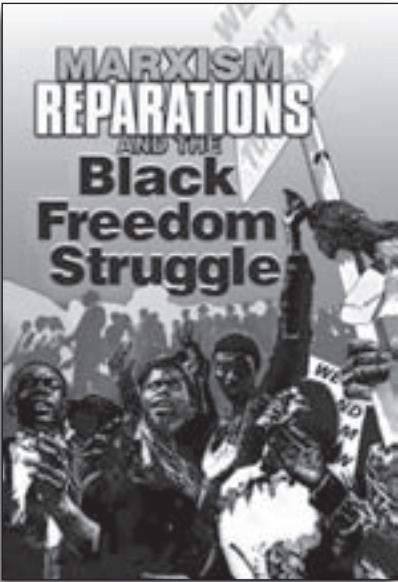
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M★NDO OBRERO

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Marxista de la India dice La Globalización significa un ataque imperialista contra el pueblo trabajador pobre

Por John Catalinotto
Nueva York

Manik Mukherjee, vicepresidente del Foro Anti Imperialista de toda la India y líder del Centro de Unidad Socialista de la India, habló en el foro del partido Workers World/Mundo Obrero el 16 de mayo junto a l@s miembr@s del Secretariado del mismo, Teresa Gutiérrez y Fred Goldstein, quienes habían regresado recientemente de una conferencia sobre el Marxismo celebrada en la Habana, Cuba. A continuación publicamos extractos del discurso de Mukherjee y de una entrevista que se le hizo ese mismo día.

Globalización es una palabra que suena bonita pero que significa un ataque imperialista contra l@s obrer@s y campesin@s. Y el imperialismo es algo muy malo para la gente común. L@s obrer@s, campesin@s y trabajador@s agrícolas están bajo ataque del imperialismo en todos los frentes.

Este ataque está encabezado por lo que se llaman Zonas Económicas Especiales, ZEE. L@s trabajador@s les llaman “Zonas Especiales de Explotación.” Se planean 1.300 ZEE para la India. Hemos sabido que muchas compañías multinacionales están siendo invitadas por el gobierno central y por el gobierno estatal—de donde yo soy, Calcuta, o sea el gobierno Occidental Bengali.

En una ZEE, el gobierno le concede el terreno a la multinacional y la compañía no tendrá que pagar alquiler por este. También recibirá electricidad y agua gratis. El gobierno Occidental Bengali dice que la globalización y las ZEE traerán industrias para el estado, pero hemos visto que ninguna industria ha sido establecida. Nosotros tenemos una frase para esto: “Un crecimiento sin empleos.” Aún en los lugares donde la producción se expande, hay una pérdida neta de empleos. Todas estas son industrias de capital intensivo sin muchas oportunidades de empleos



WW PHOTO

Manik Mukherjee

para la gente común.

En las ZEE, las leyes laborales existentes no se aplicarán. Los empresarios podrán despedir a l@s emplead@s a su voluntad. La cantidad máxima de horas que una persona debe trabajar no será mantenida; serán forzad@s a trabajar de 12 a 14 horas por día. Todo estará bajo el control del empresario.

Los pobres se empobrecen y los ricos se tornan multimillonarios

Ellos dicen que están expandiendo la industria, pero nosotros sabemos que están tomando las tierras y las usarán para el desarrollo de bienes raíces. Los ricos de la India tomarán las tierras y construirán casas y el 10 por cento de l@s ric@s de la India vivirá allí. El otro 90 por cento de la población solo se empobrecerá más.

Actualmente un 36 por ciento de l@s indí@s viven debajo del nivel de pobreza, lo que significa que consumen menos de dos comidas completas por día. Su capacidad adquisitiva es tan baja que su existencia misma está en peligro. Sufren de una

miseria inimaginable.

Por otro lado, cuatro de las personas más ricas del mundo son de la India, incluyendo a Lakshmi Mittal, dueño de Acero Mittal, la compañía de acero más grande del mundo. [Según la lista de multimillonarios de Forbes del 2008, los puestos 4, 5, 6, y 8 son indios – JC] Son estos súper-ricos y otros como ellos quienes ganan de la globalización y las ZEE, en conspiración con el estado y los gobiernos centrales.

Ellos permiten que las transnacionales penetren a la India para explotar la mano de obra y los recursos naturales, y de este modo ganar acceso a los mercados en Japón y en América Latina. Todos los países capitalistas e imperialistas están pasando por una crisis económica aguda de sobreproducción y de capital improductivo que no pueden invertir.

El capitalismo de la India también ha adquirido características imperialistas y está exportando capital a otras partes del mundo, comprando industrias, incluso compañías importantes de acero. El capital de la India está comprando mano de obra aún más barata en Nepal y Bangladesh, los cuales se han vuelto colonias económicas de la India. La India se inclina hacia los EEUU e Israel y es una gran compradora de armas israelitas.

Como las tierras del campesinado están siendo confiscadas para usarlas como ZEE, más y más personas de las zonas rurales están yéndose a las ciudades. Como no hay empleos, hay un enorme aumento del mendigar y de la prostitución. Es muy doloroso que las mujeres se encuentren forzadas a prostituirse para alimentar a sus hij@s.

Much@s trabajador@s y campesin@s se están suicidando —no menos de 2.000 el año pasado— cuando no pueden pagar sus deudas.

Nandigram significa resistencia

La empresa Dow Chemical fue invitada a Nandigram en Bengali Occidental para establecer un centro químico. Sus plantas amenazaron contaminar el aire y un río cercano. Comenzaron a acaparar toda la tierra fértil en la ZEE. L@s campesin@s y l@s trabajador@s agrícolas perderán el

uso de la tierra, lo que para ell@s significa perderlo todo.

Pero Nandigram se convirtió en otra cosa. Fue ejemplo de una tremenda resistencia. Se organizaron comités populares. Mi partido, El Centro de Unidad Socialista de la India, CUSI, estuvo muy activo en Nandigram. El gobierno estatal de Bengali Occidental intervino con dura represión. Pero el pueblo siguió luchando y defendiéndose hasta que salió victorioso. Esto ha representado un ejemplo para l@s campesin@s y trabajador@s agrícolas por toda la India. (Vea al número de este periódico del 14 de diciembre de 2007 para un artículo en inglés, “Nandigram says ‘No!’ to Dow’s chemical hub”).

Bengali Occidental es donde no solamente los partidos burgueses sino también un partido social demócrata — llamado Partido Comunista de la India-Marxista pero que nosotros en CUSI hemos considerado un partido social demócrata desde 1948 — controlan el estado. Y ellos han sido expuestos en Nandigram por usar la represión del estado para servir a los intereses capitalistas.

CUSI está tratando de unirse con otras fuerzas, por ejemplo, los Naxalitas y otras organizaciones marxista-leninistas y hasta con una parte del Partido del Congreso que se llama TMC, para protestar contra las ZEE y para desarrollar la lucha de masas y de clases.

Ahora una gran parte de la gente está viendo a CUSI como una organización de las masas y para la lucha de clases. Gradualmente estamos consiguiendo más apoyo de l@s trabajador@s, campesin@s, mujeres y estudiantes. Tenemos una organización agrícola y nuestra organización sindical es la quinta más grande en el país. CUSI existe en 17 de los 19 estados de la India.

Nos oponemos al subcontrato. Estamos en solidaridad, por ejemplo, con l@s trabajador@s estadounidenses que pierden su trabajo debido al subcontrato, y también nos oponemos a las compañías de la India que subcontratan. La subcontratación es una conspiración para despojar a l@s trabajador@s de diferentes países, y tenemos que mantener la solidaridad entre la clase trabajadora. En la India también tenemos que construir la solidaridad.

Los británicos, durante su régimen colonial, dividieron al pueblo a través de la religión — una parte musulmana y otra hindú — para así poder “dividir y gobernar”. Fue doloroso que los líderes nacionales del Partido del Congreso ayudaran a la conspiración británica y se hicieran principalmente el partido de l@s hindúes. Ahora la clase dominante está siguiendo la misma política, en nombre de la religión y por el sistema de casta entre l@s hindúes. Está dividiendo a la gente para impedir la unidad del proletariado.

Tenemos una tarea difícil para convencer a la gente común, la clase trabajadora, que la casta y la religión no deben dividirnos. Pero debemos luchar junt@s, unid@s, contra el capitalismo y el imperialismo. □



**Libertad para los cinco compatriotas cubanos que defendieron
a su país del terrorismo y que ahora están presos en EE.UU.
por evitar muertes en la isla.**

**Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero,
Gerardo Hernández y René González.**